**Debatindlæg på Bridgewinners under overskriftenden** [**Frequency of common conventions**](http://bridgewinners.com/forums/read/intermediate-forum/frequency-of-common-conventions/) **den 20 januar 2022 af Bill Segraves**

I thought it might be interesting to go through Larry Cohen's list of 16 conventions at <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/read-this-first-what-should-we-play> and offer a few thoughts on frequency (expressed as a % of all deals in which our side employs the convention), usefulness, cost (what you give up) and memory load (the OP's "plot," in four dimensions).

1) Negative doubles: a) high frequency - about 1.5% of deals, counting only negative doubles played through 2♠, and counting only auctions with a negative double, not the auctions on which playing negative doubles gives you an inference when you choose some other action; b) very high usefulness - very valuable for enabling responder to distinguish suit lengths at the one level and to show suits that can't be bid at the two level; c) low cost at the 1-level, cost of giving up penalty double increases at higher levels but still well worth it; d) low memory load.

2) Blackwood: a) high frequency - about 1.5-2% of deals, in some form (this was a little trickier to tease out, for technical and systemic reasons, but it gives you the ballpark); b) fairly high usefulness - nice to avoid being off two aces (or keycards), but this is far from your most important tool for deciding whether to go to slam; c) cost low, except when you want 4NT to mean something else!; d) relatively low memory load, if playing straight Blackwood, but key card can get you into complications about what's trump suit, don't even get me started on real world expert mix-ups when playing various non-4NT calls as ace-askings, and in contested auctions or misfit auctions, even 4NT can be the source of disagreements as to whether it's ace-asking or something else.

3) Stayman: a) high frequency - on the order of 1% of deals, in some form (this was a little trickier to tease out, for technical and systemic reasons, but it gives you the ballpark); very high usefulness - this is how people find their 4-4 major suit fits, and for many, how they start certain minor suit slam investigations; c) cost low; d) low memory load.

4) Jacoby Transfers: a) high frequency - on the order of 1% of deals, over 1NT or 2NT (this was a little trickier to tease out, for technical and systemic reasons, but it gives you the ballpark); b) very high usefulness - right-siding is nice, but the real power of it is enabling distinction of hands of different strength and sending two-step (or more) messages; c) low cost; d) low memory load.

5) Fourth Suit (Artificial) Game Forcing: a) low frequency (for technical and systemic reasons, I can't give you great numbers, but these are on the same order of magnitude as the game forcing hands with two-way checkback that I referenced above, a few tenths of a percent); b) high usefulness when it comes up - sometimes you just don't have the right bid to describe your hand and need to just set up the force, and playing fourth suit as artificial GF also helps you to handle invitational hands by defining certain sequences as \*not\* game forcing; c) moderately low cost, though there are times when you wish the bid actually were natural; d) moderately low but non-negligible memory load - you do have to discuss and remember when it applies (e.g., when you're already in a GF auction, or after 1♣-1♦-1♥).

6) Methods versus opponent's 1NT: a) high frequency - on the order of 1-2% of deals; b) very high usefulness - you want to be able to compete effectively over their 1NT; c) ranges from low cost for giving up natural 2♣ to high cost for giving up penalty double; d) memory load relatively low if methods are simple and you're not facing weak notrumpers. (Cohen recommends DONT, while I recommend Landy as a starting point.)

7) Weak jumps in competition: a) high frequency - on the order of 1% of deals; b) very high usefulness - preempts work!; c) relatively low cost when non-vulnerable, clearly offset by advantages except when at unfavorable vulnerability; d) low memory load, unless changing meaning with vulnerability!

8) 2NT feature ask after weak 2: a) low frequency - on the order of a few tenths of a percent of deals (this was a little trickier to tease out, for technical and systemic reasons, but it gives you the ballpark); b) high usefulness when it comes up; c) low cost - natural is not a good use for 2NT here; d) memory load low if playing feature ask (a little higher if playing Ogust, which is IMO a better choice for those who play undisciplined weak 2s).

9a) Unusual notrump: a) moderate frequency - approximately 0.5 percent of deals; b) moderate usefulness when it comes up - opps with appropriate methods aren't greatly hindered and will take advantage of it during the play, but when you have a \*real\* freak, it can get you to some great spots; c) low cost - natural is not a good use of 2NT here; memory load low.

9b) Michaels cuebid: a) moderate frequency - approximately 0.5 percent of deals; b) moderate usefulness when it comes up -opps with appropriate methods aren't greatly hindered and will take advantage of it during the play, and you can often do as well by bidding your suits; c) low cost in majors, higher cost over minors, especially if 1♣ can be short; d) memory load relatively low - just be sure you have agreement as to whether it applies on any but the simplest auctions, and if you start messing with what you do over 1♣ (such as playing 2♦ Michaels), the memory load just shot up.

10) New minor checkback: a) moderate frequency - ~ 0.2% GF checkback hands, and invitational will be higher (for technical and systemic reasons, I don't have numbers for the invitational); b) moderately high usefulness when it comes up - it's how you find your 5-3 fits and 4-4 fits in the other major; c) low cost - you weren't likely to be playing that minor anyway; d) memory load - higher than most people probably think. New minor auctions can be complicated. IMO, two-way checkback actually takes less total memory load.

11) Jacoby 2NT: a) moderate frequency - on the order 0.5% of deals (for systemic reasons, I don't have good numbers); b) moderately high usefulness when it comes up - setting trumps and getting info about opener's strength and shape are key for good slam bidding; c) moderate cost - 2NT here is a bid I'd like to have as natural, but a forcing major raise is more important; d) memory load moderate for the follow-ups.

12) Support doubles: a) low frequency - on the order of 0.1% of deals or a bit higher (I didn't go for precision on this number, but it's not far off); b) moderate usefulness when it comes up - it's good to show 3 card support, but since it says nothing about strength or other features, it doesn't necessarily help you as much as you'd like; c) moderate cost - the ability to show strength or, at the 2-level especially, to suggest a penalty, are valuable; d) memory load relatively low as long as you know what level you play it through.

13) Lebensohl: a) very low frequency - approximately 0.05% of deals; b) high usefulness when it comes up - you want to be able to distinguish good hands from competitive hands; c) medium cost - 2NT natural wouldn't often be your call of choice, but it can happen here; d) memory load relatively low.

14) Drury: a) low frequency - approximately 0.2% of deals; b) moderately high usefulness when it comes up - the main advantage of Drury is not that it lets you open particularly light, but that you don't wind up at the 3-level when making a 3 card invite. You can, however, accomplish much the same thing by playing a semi-forcing notrump (i.e., that opener will pass if holding a balanced hand that wouldn't accept a 3 card invite); c) cost - moderate, you actually do sometimes have a hand that would like to make a natural 2♣ call (or 2♦ call if playing 2-way Drury); d) memory load - relatively low, but be sure you know what the follow-ups mean (especially after 1♠-2♣-2♥).

15) Inverted minors: a) low frequency - approximately 0.2% of deals; b) moderately high usefulness when you hold a hand that is most easily described in this way, though there are other approaches that can handle those hand types; c) cost - moderately high, a natural single raise can be a useful call; d) memory load - high, including important questions relating to the inverted minor follow-ups but also to how you handle hands with support that are not suitable for an inverted raise.

16) Splinter bids: a) low frequency - approximately 0.2% of deals (based on a style that ranges from relatively light but game-forcing splinters through hands limited to about 15 support points); b) moderately high usefulness in identifying potential duplication of values, but high space consumption is significant disadvantage; c) cost - relatively low, the natural bids would rarely if ever be made; d) memory load - relatively low.

Cohen's list is a good one (unsurprisingly, given the source), and I agree for the most part with his priority order. The ones at the top score well on all dimensions.

My next additions would perhaps be extension of the Lebensohl concept to reverse auctions and in advancing a double of a weak 2 bid.

For contested auctions, one need add no new conventions other than various doubles and certain actual or virtual cuebids. The key is to be on the same page as to the meaning of key bids that will come up a lot.

Some of the most important of these are:

Cuebid by responder to show invitational+ with support.
Jump raises by responder to show either preemptive or mixed raise values, per agreement.
Cuebid by advancer to invitational+ with support for overcaller, potentially with other strong hands, per agreement.
Jump raises by responder to show either preemptive or mixed raise values, per agreement.
Defense vs Michaels and Unusual 2NT